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Long Ago in Judea

*A CHRISTMAS PLAY
IN TWO SCENES*

BY
VIRGINIA SANDERSON

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CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

TWO SLAVES OF HEROD.

PHARES, *Herod's favorite.*

HEROD, *King of Judea.*

TWO GUARDS OF HEROD.

DARIUS, *counselor and scribe of Herod.*

MARIUS, *Herod's chief spy.*

GASPAR

MELCHIOR

BALTHAZAR

} *The Three Wise Men.*

THE GOOD ANGEL OF HEROD.

THE BAD ANGEL OF HEROD.

MARY

JOSEPH

THE BABE

AN ANGEL

GABRIEL

} *The Holy Family.*

SCENE: *An audience chamber in the palace of
HEROD, in JUDEA.*

TIME: *Just before the birth of Christ.*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR COSTUMES

The costumes for the characters in "Long Ago in Judea" can be both effective and inexpensive. Materials such as canton flannel, flannelette, paper cambric, Japanese crepe, silkalene, as well as old scraps of silk or crepe de chine dresses, are most satisfactory.

Reddish purple dyed canton flannel or blood-red crepe covered with soft gold material form a good basis for the costume of Herod, which should fall after the fashion of a loose gown to the ankles. A gold girdle, armlets, anklets and neck chains can be made from a combination of hardware store materials, cardboard, gold and silver paper and gold and aluminum paints. An elaborate headdress is also appropriate, and may be partially secured from any five-and-ten-cent-store. Much gold and purple will help symbolize in costume the character and position of the king. A full black crepe beard is also effective.

Phares, the favorite, can be dressed in a costume following closely the Grecian style of dress. White flannel trimmed in royal blue, with a royal blue cape, has been used with great effect. A blue band can be used as a fillet. The legs should be bare but may be laced with blue strips. Phares also wears much jewelry,—armlets, neck chains, etc., though less in quantity and magnificence than Herod's.

The two slaves of Herod can be dressed in bur-lap or some rough cloth, without sleeves, or in a kind of court uniform. Yarn wigs are effective, and arms and legs may be stained brown.

The guards of Herod can be costumed in black or

gray paper cambric, made in simple tunic style to the knees, and without sleeves. Helmets may be made of pliable cardboard, cut to shape, and covered with silver paper or may be beaten into shape out of tin. Shields may be made in much the same way, while swords can be cut from wood, and painted with silver aluminum paint or gray paint. Knee protectors and arm protectors can also be used.

Darius can be costumed in dark green paper cambric,—a loose fitting gown with long sleeves, the gown reaching to the ankles and belted at the waist with a knotted rope girdle. A long white beard and wig, or a headdress and beard, add to his effectiveness.

Marius, the spy, can be dressed after the style of Phares, except for a change of color, preferably some color which is complementary to reddish purple, the color of Herod. The similarity in costumes between the favorite and the spy, together with Marius' acting, should bring out his desire to become the favorite and his effort to displace Phares.

The Three Wise Men offer many possibilities for costume. One of them may have an elaborate gold headdress, another a crown and another a turban, or all may wear turbans. To vary the costume effect one may wear a long gown reaching to the ankles and a long cape with a train; the second may wear a similar gown of different color combination with a full cape which only reaches to the ankles; and the third may be dressed after the Turkish or Moorish fashion, and be stained dark brown. This third one may wear armlets and ear rings, while the other two may content themselves with one or two elaborate neck ornaments, similar to those seen in Bible pictures of priests of Old Testament days.

All the angels should wear long white nightgowns as a costume foundation, and over these white cheesecloth draped, or long, flowing gowns of cheese-

cloth, which reach several inches below the feet. (Angels on the stage should not walk, as movement destroys the illusion of ethereal beings. They should appear and disappear behind curtains.) Halos may be made by wrapping hat wire with silver tinsel, and fastening it above the head by means of thin wire. If wings are desired, they may be made with buckram, wire and tinsel or aluminum paint, and fastened to the shoulders by means of wire or strips of cloth.

The Bad Angel of Herod should be dressed in red devil's costume with cape and horned hood.

Mary can be dressed in light blue silk-alene with a Madonna head drape of some soft blue or smoke colored material, such as a chiffon scarf. Joseph may be in soft green, or in a darker blue, his costume again following the style seen in old Bible pictures.

In the scene between Herod, his good angel and his bad angel, effective lighting can be secured very easily. A red spotlight placed in the footlight trough and focussed on the bad angel, and a blue or green spotlight to illumine the good angel are all that are necessary. As Herod leans from side to side he comes within the radius of the appropriate light; at other times he is in shadow.

THE AUTHOR.

Long Ago in Judea

SCENE I

The audience chamber of HEROD. For this scene the curtain cyclorama, hung about the center of the stage, may be used. Against this can be hung canvas or back of oilcloth strips, painted to represent tapestry. Against the cyclorama, center back, is the throne chair of HEROD, elevated on a platform to a height which will place him well above the other actors. Steps, carpeted by a strip, lead up to the throne chair. The platform should be large enough to hold not only the chair, but a gong arrangement by which HEROD summons his servants.

As the curtain rises, the two SLAVES of HEROD are discovered, carefully adjusting the crimson strip that lines the steps to the throne chair.

FIRST SLAVE.

Take care you lay the carpet carefully!

Baree last week was careless. We would not

Follow Baree to torture and to death.

You who are young in Herod's rule, take care.

SECOND SLAVE. (*Bitterly*)

To order a man's death for such a thing,—

Because there was a crease upon the step!

FIRST SLAVE. (*Glancing about cautiously*)

Hush, reckless one. Let no one hear your words!

Herod has tortured men for less than that,
As you will find if you stay long enough in
court.

The spies are as the leaves upon the trees.
(*Aloud for the sake of eavesdroppers*)

Herod is great. There is no king like Herod.
All he commands is righteous, wise and just!

SECOND SLAVE. (*Glancing around cautiously, also
in a loud voice*)

Herod is stronger than all other kings!
(*In a lower tone*)

But he is like a man gone mad today.
'Tis said he sits and broods, staring ahead
With strange, still eyes; then suddenly he breaks
His silence with a curse, and raves and tears
His robes. No man can understand, they say,
The reason. Lara, who is keeper of the gate,
That enters Herod's secret garden, says
It is a message brought this early morn
That roused his fury. All men are afraid.

FIRST SLAVE. (*Fearfully*)

When Herod rages none are safe from death.
Even his favorite walks with cautious feet.
See that you lay this carpet skillfully,
Smoother than all the silk of Araby.
Soft as a new-born infant. One faint crease,—
And we shall taste the bitter cup of death!

SECOND SLAVE. (*Rising and surveying the step
anxiously*)

There is no roughness now.—Yet here's a place!
(*Cautiously*)

The head of him who came this early morn
Bringing the message, hangs from the East
Gate,

So Lara said,—slain by the king himself.

FIRST SLAVE.

Hush, fool! It is not wise to carry tales.
Let us begone before the king comes here.

(They take a last look at the carpet and are about to depart when PHARES, the favorite of HEROD, enters, hardly more than a boy in appearance, yet old for his years. He is dressed luxuriously, with much jewelry,—gifts from HEROD. He seems, however, nervous and hurried. The two SLAVES, who have shrunk in fright before his coming, relax somewhat when they recognize him.)

PHARES. *(Hastily)*

Herod holds private counsel here at once.

He comes along the hallway even now

Like some wild thing. Is all in readiness?

FIRST SLAVE.

We have but now made the red carpet smooth.

PHARES.

Stand guard then, at the doors. Let no one in.

Herod will send for those whom he will see.

(The two hasten out, R. As the SECOND SLAVE goes he disarranges the carpet a trifle, but does not notice it. PHARES has turned to the left from which HEROD is heard approaching, and also fails to notice the disarrangement. As HEROD is about to enter, his voice is heard angrily exclaiming:)

HEROD.

Get hence!! All of the court go hence!

Herod would be alone. Alone, I say!

Blood and more blood for lying, idle tales!

Would blood might drown the tale poured in
my ears!

(HEROD backs on to the stage and stands for a moment staring in the direction from which he has come.)

PHARES. (*Dropping on one knee*)
Tetrarch!

HEROD. (*Turning*)

Be still. This is no time for words.

There are too many words within my head.

Go. See there are none lingering about,

To find why Herod storms like one gone mad.

The world is mad, not Herod. Clear the halls.

Listen for treasonous sayings. Then return.

(PHARES *exits*, and HEROD *turns before walking slowly toward the throne.*)

HEROD.

The old fear is upon me like a plague.

And who is Herod to know craven fear?

Nothing can break his rule. There is no king

So powerful as Herod, none so feared.

And while men fear, they hasten to obey.—

While men obey, then is the kingdom strong!

I will be master. I will be obeyed!

Herod is king. Nothing can conquer Herod!

(*On the last words his tones are almost wild, as though he were trying to convince himself of something he doubts. He turns to mount the steps to the throne, stumbles over the disarranged carpet left by the SLAVE, and barely saves himself from falling. He perceives the ruffled carpet.*)

HEROD. (*In fury*)

The dogs would have me fall and kill myself,

Leaving the kingdom to a traitor king!

Bring me the slaves who did this thing. Ho,
guards!

Phares, come hither!

(*Mounts to throne, and beats on gong, at which*

sound the GUARDS enter hastily, followed by PHARES. HEROD continues to rave, almost unconscious of their presence.)

Bring the plotting slaves!
They shall be taught obedience and know
When Herod said the carpet shall be smooth,
Smooth it shall be.

(Suddenly aware of the kneeling guards)

The slaves who tend this room,
Bring them before me. I will be obeyed.
(GUARDS exit, and HEROD continues, slowly, staring ahead, as though some vision were before his eyes.)

While men obey me, is the kingdom strong.

(The two GUARDS re-enter, bringing the two SLAVES. PHARES stands to the left of the throne platform at its base. The GUARDS throw the SLAVES to the ground before the steps, and take position at the right and left of the platform.)

FIRST SLAVE. *(Groveling)*

Mercy, oh King, greater than whom there is
none.

Pity, Tetrarch, if we have failed in service.

HEROD.

"If," dogs? Low spies, seeking the life of
Herod!

Herod has found out.

FIRST SLAVE.

Mercy, Tetrarch, and pity!

HEROD.

Mercy? Pity? Bah, those are the words of
weaklings.

Slaves need two stronger words, one you know
not,—obedience!

One that all traitors learn, that is the good word,
—torture!

(*The FIRST SLAVE moans and again cries, "Pity!"*)

HEROD. (*Wrathfully*)

Cut out their tongues that they may learn the value of silence.

Tear out their ears and eyes, deaf and blind to obedience.

Burn out their hearts and teach all those who plot against Herod,

Herod is King of Judea, he and his heirs forever.

SECOND SLAVE.

What act of ours, O King, brought down your wrath?

HEROD.

Peace, dog! 'Tis not for Kings to answer questions.

I did command the carpet to lie smooth.

PHARES.

You did not fasten it secure enough.

The king came near to falling, through your fault.

HEROD.

Be silent, Phares. Herod cannot fall!

Take them away.

SECOND SLAVE. (*As he is dragged away*)

A curse on kings like you!

Happy the day the prophets have announced!

HEROD. (*Half rising, staying their departure with his hand*)

Hold, guards! The day the prophets have announced!

What know you of this day? Let him stand free.

Speak, or, by sacred oath, you stay alive

Till death become more welcome than all life.

SECOND SLAVE. (*Suddenly afraid*)

I do not know.

PHARES.

'Twere best to speak at once.
'Twill but make matters worse to hold your
tongue.

SECOND SLAVE. (*Reluctantly*)

My father was a seer in our land.
He taught me much, before you made me slave.
Some time, he said, when should appear a star,
A king more mighty than all kings should rise
To rule o'er Israel.

HEROD. (*Upright in wrath*)

Quick, take them away!
And tear them into bits before my dogs.
Quick! Get them hence!
(*Sinking back on his throne.*)
A king greater than Herod?

(*He sits there brooding as the SLAVES are dragged out, staring in front of him, hands clenched, eyes straight ahead of him.*)

PHARES. (*Seating himself on one of the steps*)
Herod is great. Great kings believe no tales
Told by a sorcerer.

HEROD. (*Bitterly*)

Peace, Phares! You
Talk about kings? At times you do presume
Upon my favor. Forget not my grace
And that alone keeps you in envied place.
My court despises you, raised from a slave,
To ease my hours. The people hate you, too,
Living in luxury here at the court,
Instead of starving with them. But at times,
You are presumptuous. Do not forget,
For all your freedom, you are still my slave.

PHARES. (*Slowly*)

It is not likely that I shall forget.

HEROD. (*Appeased somewhat by his submissive manner*)

Enough, then. You alone shall know my mind.
The story that the slave dog cried is true,
There is a prophecy of a new king.

That much I know, naught more,—except of
late

A bright blue star has hung low in the sky.

(*Pause.*)

The sign might trouble me, were I not Herod!
Yet (for all kings, if wise, watch everybody),
I have made plans. Today I question some
Whom I have cause to think know more than
they

Would have me guess.

But since the court might think

Me strange, even to give a second thought

To idle tales, I would not have them know.

But you shall hear and marvel at my skill.

(*Strikes gong, and when GUARD enters*)

Have sent Darius to me in all haste.

PHARES.

Herod delights to jest. The story true?

A king born under a low-swinging star?

Granted the star, you have no son, O King.

HEROD. (*Savagely*)

Be still! Wilt lose thy tongue, provoking me?

PHARES.

King, I am dumb. I mean not to offend.

(*They remain silent until the GUARD ushers in an old bent man with white hair and beard, carrying a heavy roll of parchment. It is DARIUS, the scholar, counselor to HEROD. He waits for HEROD to speak.*)

HEROD. (*Leaning forward,—speaking with repressed eagerness*)

Come, say, old man. Can answer all my questions?

Have you old prophecies upon your lips?

DARIUS.

For fifty years—aye more—I have been reading
Old prophecies, peering into the future,
The knowledge of the stars is mine. Long
years——

HEROD. (*Rudely*)

I did not bid you come to hear your life.
Some days ago I gave you my commands.
How have they been obeyed?

DARIUS.

As well, O King,
As is in power of man.

HEROD.

Speak then. Begin.

DARIUS. (*Opening parchment*)

A child, according to the ancient prophets,
Shall be conceived to be the king of Israel.

HEROD. (*In a tone that bodes ill*)

A child, and king, when Herod has no son?
'Tis monstrous. Say! where shall this child be
born?

DARIUS.

In Bethlehem of Juda, it is said.

HEROD.

Who says those words?

DARIUS.

The prophet of old time.

(*Anxiously*)

Thus is it written.

(*He reads from the parchment, while both HEROD and PHARES lean forward eagerly, HEROD, tense, fearful; PHARES, curious and interested.*)

DARIUS. (*Reading slowly*) "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel."

HEROD. (*Ominously*)

It shall not be! When will the child be born?

DARIUS.

Nought says the prophecy, O King, save this,—
A star shall mark his coming.

PHARES. (*Surprised*)

The blue star

That has been noticed lately in the sky!

HEROD. (*Motioning PHARES to be silent*)

What more? Speak on, old man.

DARIUS.

There is no more.

HEROD.

No more? Yes, but there is! You think to keep
The knowledge from me? Is the child yet born?

DARIUS.

I know not, Tetrarch.

HEROD.

You know not? And what

Is learning for but to teach wisdom? Speak!

DARIUS. (*Trembling*)

Herod is great! I know of nothing more.

PHARES. (*As HEROD rises threateningly*)

Surely, O King, the old man speaks the truth.

HEROD. (*Beating on the gong*)

Ho, guards! Seize—hold these, both. A plot.
A plot!

(*The two GUARDS enter. One steps between DARIUS and PHARES, but the other kneels before the KING, who pauses, hand upraised.*)

HEROD. (*Surprised at such ignoring of orders*)

What means this disobedience and delay?

GUARD.

I but obey, O King. The three are here,
Those whom you did command to be announced
The moment of arrival.

HEROD.

The strange kings!

GUARD.

They seek the king in whose land hangs the star.
Those were their words. They wish to speak
with you.

HEROD. (*Half to himself*)

These are the three whom Marius, my spy,
Said could inform me of this traitor child
Born to be king, and not of Herod's blood!

(*Aloud*)

Send Marius to me. And then show them in,
When I shall sound the gong. As for these two,
Unhand them till I shall decide their fate.

(*Fiercely to DARIUS*)

If I shall learn from these more than you know
Your life is naught.

(*To PHARES*)

Unless you hold your tongue
I'll have it out, upon my sacred oath.

MARIUS. (*The spy, entering, and bowing before*
HEROD)

Your servant waits commands.

HEROD. (*Grimly, beckoning MARIUS near, and*
talking confidentially)

The three are here,
Of whom you brought me word. Stand by me
now.

Listen what words they say, then follow them,
See where they go, then bring me word again.
I will profess to be pleased with the child,
Ask them to bring him here—and—if they
come—

MARIUS. (*Nodding, in appreciation*)

Your servant shall obey.

HEROD. (*Muttering*)

The child shall die,

Though it shall take a thousand lives to win.

(*He straightens himself upon his throne and strikes the gong. There now enter in single file the Magi, GASPAS, MELCHIOR and BALTHAZAR, unattended, but bearing in their arms their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They salute the KING. If possible, it is most effective to have the WISE MEN attended by two NUBIAN SLAVES, bearing torches on tall candles.*)

BALTHAZAR.

Hail, King! Peace be to thee and thine forever.

GASPAR.

May love spread its bright light across your pathway.

MELCHIOR.

Greetings, O King, from three who seek your guidance.

HEROD. (*Bluntly*)

What kings be you who come here thus attended,

Unbidden, and unknown within my realm?

MELCHIOR.

We be three kings who come from the far East, sire,

I, Melchoir, and he, Gaspar, King of Taurus, And Balthazar, the Prince of Araby.

We seek a child, newborn, who shall be king, According to an ancient prophecy,

Of all the Jews. And we would worship him.

Where may he be? We bring him tribute gifts.

HEROD.

A child who shall be king? I have no son.

BALTHAZAR.

Yet did the new, bright star lead us this way.
The star foretold by prophets, the sure sign
That he who will rule Israel is here.
Twelve days it has led onward. Drawing near
Your palace gates it vanished from our sight.
So surely we are near the newborn king.

HEROD. (*Thoughtfully*)

It may be so. But the old prophecy?
What were its words?

GASPAR.

Thus did the prophet speak—
I have the words by heart as they are writ.
(*Slowly and impressively*)

“And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art
not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of
thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people
Israel.”

HEROD. (*Impatiently*)

Yes, yes, that much I know. Speak on. What
more?

GASPAR.

There is no more except that a new star
Shall mark his coming.

HEROD.

What, no more? How old
May the child be? He must be found at once.

BALTHAZAR. (*Eagerly*)

Found? Yea! He cannot be but a small babe,
At best no more than two weak years in life.
Give us permission, King, to search your realm
Until we find him.

HEROD. (*With a show of generosity*)

Swiftly search, oh kings,
Herod doth give you freedom of his realm,—
And one to aid you, one who knows my land!
Ho, Marius! Attend our worthy friends,

And see you spare no effort and no time
To find this—king, that I may—worship him.

(MARIUS bows. *The three* KINGS salute HEROD, who rises as they depart. MARIUS and HEROD confer together as the procession leaves, and as PHARES is speaking;—then MARIUS exits, after the three.)

PHARES. (*To himself*)

A strange tale this, that somehow moves my heart!

A star,—three from the East,—a prophecy;—
And Herod thirsting for a little life
Too weak for struggle.

(*To the KING*)

Master, may I speak?

HEROD. (*Somewhat graciously now that the prospect of securing the child seems sure*)

Speak, Phares!

PHARES. (*Kneeling*)

Will you forgive your servants, lord,
The scribe here and myself, your humble slave,
For any disobedience, now past?

HEROD. (*Nodding, benignly*)

Go free, old man, back to your books. Yet stay,
Study the stars right carefully, and learn
If they say not Herod shall have a son.

(DARIUS exits.)

You, Phares, are forgiven for this time.
See that your tongue displease me not again.
Go now, and bid the dancing girls attend
Me at the banquet. I will come anon.
But for a space Herod would be alone.

(PHARES and all exit. *The lights grow dim. A weird music, like a half forgotten melody, begins to hum faintly. HEROD is seen dimly,*

seated on his throne, motionless, in deep thought. Suddenly a blue light at HEROD'S right glows faintly and in its vague radiance the outline of an ANGEL is seen. It is HEROD'S GOOD ANGEL. During the following conversation HEROD does not speak directly to either his GOOD ANGEL or his BAD ANGEL, although both address him. He merely inclines to the side of of the one speaking, looking out over the audience as though the voices were coming from within him.)

GOOD ANGEL. (*Sadly*)

Thy thoughts are evil, Herod. Change thy thoughts.

HEROD. (*Nodding*)

Yes, yes, I must not think those thoughts at all. It is not good men's minds should think of deeds Too full of blood. I've had too much of blood.

(There is a red light at HEROD'S left, and the BAD ANGEL of HEROD is seen crouching beside his chair, dressed in DEVIL'S costume.)

BAD ANGEL.

Kings cannot quail at blood and still be kings.

HEROD.

True,—If my plans should fail, and the young child

Of the old prophecy escape my grasp,

I shall lose all,—my throne,—perchance my life.

BAD ANGEL. (*Maliciously*)

How men would mock at you! Herod the king, Dethroned by a mere babe. Herod afraid!

HEROD. (*Proudly*)

Herod fears nothing.

BAD ANGEL.

Therefore is a king.

GOOD ANGEL. (*Anxiously*)

Kings are but men. Men once were babes in arms.

Wilt fight a child? It is not kingly, Herod!

Let the three Magi worship the small babe.

Let them depart in freedom with the child,

If they desire. Dost fear a little one?

BAD ANGEL. (*Quickly*)

Yet when the babe is lad,—what if he rise,

Plotting 'gainst Herod's throne and Herod's life?

(*Then slowly, with intent*)

'Twere best to nip small evils in the bud

Before they grow too large for remedy.

HEROD. (*His hands against his temples*)

I shall go mad. Two tongues possess my brain.

Which counsels best?

GOOD ANGEL.

Hark to my counsel, Herod!

BAD ANGEL. (*Slyly*)

That counsels best which is the safest, Herod.

What is a child compared to thy great throne?

What is a life if Herod's be made safe?

GOOD ANGEL.

Thy hands are bloody, Herod, but so far

They are not red and stained with children's blood.

That were the final sin.

HEROD.

Yes, it were well

To keep the blood of children from my hands.

(*After a pause*)

The three strange Magi shall depart in peace.

But I will bring the child here to the court

And have him watched that he can do no harm.

BAD ANGEL. (*Insinuatingly*)

And if you do not find him,—if these three
Strange Magi worship him and then depart
Without your finding where the child is laid,—
What then, O Herod?

HEROD. (*Slowly, as the thought takes possession
of him*)

If the kings depart
Leaving the child in secret,—why—why, then,—
Fear like a sore will fester in my heart,
Defying healing. I shall sleep no more.
But see a murderer in every man,
Dream of a babe who wears King Herod's
crown,—

BAD ANGEL. (*Continuing*)

Knowing no peace you will go mad, O Herod,
All will be lost, kingdom and wealth and power!
And men will jeer,—jeer at the name of
Herod,—

Jeer, because you, the *great* king, are afraid!

HEROD. (*Hoarsely*)

The child must die. Herod must save his king-
dom.

GOOD ANGEL.

Herod, take heed. Fear has made blind your
vision.

BAD ANGEL. (*With an evil smile*)

Many long years lie before Herod. Tributes,
Gold, slaves and silk, aye, and long chains of
jewels,

These and much more are yours, once you are
free from this child.

GOOD ANGEL. (*Warningly*)

Avarice, King, mad greed,—stops up the ears of
wisdom.

BAD ANGEL. (*Insistently*)

Once the babe is destroyed, long shall the king-
dom prosper!

Herod shall live a life, feared and admired by mankind,—

Herod, who fears none living, *Herod*, the mighty *Herod*.

GOOD ANGEL. (*Pleading*)

Pride will go down in madness. Pride will destroy thee, Herod.

BAD ANGEL. (*Quickly*)

Herod will be supreme, once that small life be taken!

HEROD. (*Rising to his feet*)

Herod must be supreme. What is a life to Herod?

Let the small babe be slain. Let it die by my orders.

And if the child escape, flee and go into hiding, Thinking to 'scape me thus,—there's no escape from Herod,

Herod's commands are these,—unless the babe be taken,

Aye, and the three strange Kings, taken and torn to pieces,

All men-children shall die, throughout the length of my kingdom,

Children born but a day, children less than two summers,

None shall be spared to life, neither the highest nor the lowest,

So I will kill the child, though I must kill a thousand.

Herod must be supreme! None can conquer me, Herod!

(*He slinks back upon his throne, exhausted, his head on his chest, his hands convulsively clutching the arms of the throne chair. The GOOD ANGEL turns away, horror-stricken, and as the curtain slowly falls, the BAD ANGEL of HEROD is seen standing over HEROD triumphantly.*)

SCENE II

The Nativity Scene can be set directly behind the cyclorama of the first scene, which should be easily removed. Screens or a second set of curtains will form the background for this second scene. All else that is needed is a manger, some hay, manger drapes of burlap and some soft hanging material, and, if desired, the Christmas Star.

For the manger, a packing box, set in slant-wise and nailed to an old sawhorse, draped with cloth material and sprinkled with hay, can be used. The floor of the stage should also be sprinkled quite thickly and unevenly with hay.

The BABE of the HOLY FAMILY is simulated by means of a short-handled electric flashlight, wrapped in clothes to represent swaddling clothes, and placed in the manger, below the level of the audience's line of vision, in such a way as to illumine the face of MARY as she bends over the manger. A strong light is needed.

The manger is placed at the back, just right of the center; MARY, seated behind it, bends over the BABE in an adoring attitude; JOSEPH, standing behind MARY, assumes a position of watchfulness and pride. The ANGEL, guarding the Three, is elevated center back. This can be managed most effectively by placing a table back of the rear cyclorama, standing the ANGEL on this table and then draping and pinning the cyclorama curtains behind the ANGEL in such a way as to silhouette her against them, and yet

conceal the table. This will necessitate a parting of the curtains center back, but arranged properly, the ANGEL will seem to be floating in mid air.

The only lights needed are the light from the manger, and a bright blue spotlight in the foot-light trough to illumine the ANGEL. A spotlight from the balcony is even more effective, as it can be widened later to include the entire stage, and will also serve to illumine and outline GABRIEL, who should speak from the balcony if possible. Spotlights, placed right and left on the stage in the wings at an elevation of six to ten feet, the right side spotlight illuminating the left side of the stage, and the left side spotlight the right side, are also good. Spotlights should be used with the new blue gelatine screens which give moonlight effect.

Just before the curtain rises, a chorus of voices sings, "Holy Night, Silent Night," "The Holy Mother Speaketh," or some other appropriate hymn. On the last stanza, if not before, the curtain is drawn, disclosing the Nativity Scene in tableau. The THREE WISE MEN kneel in a kind of semi-circle on the left. BALTHAZAR should be furthest down stage. If pantomime is desired the THREE WISE MEN may act out the words of the song, "We, Three Kings of Orient Are," to the song of the chorus.

At the close of this song, or after a short hold of the tableau picture, there is a stir at the auditorium door, and a dark-cloaked figure hurries down the aisle, and up on the stage (left of the stage,) remaining for a moment just outside the stage picture, as though uncertain what to do. It is PHARES.

Glancing hastily behind him, he steps forward and touches BALTHAZAR on the arm. Quietly

BALTHAZAR *leaves his brother kings and withdraws with PHARES to the extreme front of the stage, where the conversation begins.*

PHARES. (*In a tone at first of controlled tenseness, which becomes gradually more and more horror-filled*)

Phares my name, O King. Once of the court of Herod.

Herod's no more—for reasons. Enough. I bring you a warning.

It is not safe to stay here in the realm an instant. Herod has ordered death, death to you and the infant.

Straight from his lips I have it. Under cover of music,

There at the banquet board, sodden with drink and feasting,

Leaned he over one side, flung an arm 'cross my shoulders

Whispered his plan to me, laughed aloud as he said it,

Winked and laying a finger on his soft lips said, "Secret."

Then I bided my time, slipped away and came hither.

Horror would tear me loose did I the plan uncover

In all its madness,—but this is the truth I utter,—

Fly while there yet is time. Warn the two for the infant,

There is no time to lose. Death comes close on my footsteps.

BALTHAZAR. (*Unafraid, the glory of worship still shining on his face*)

Peace, young man. Be still. There is no need for fearing.

This is the babe we sought. Him we have
found and worshipped.

(Thoughtfully)

Yet thy quick words are strange, since but the
night past, dreaming,

I have been warned of God to worship and has-
ten quickly,

I, and my brother kings, back to the lands we
came from.

So are we on our way, carrying back to our peo-
ple

News of the newborn King, born to be Ruler
of Mankind.

Fear not for Him, young man. God will protect
His Chosen.

*(He turns, the two other KINGS rise and all depart
slowly to the soft strains of "We Three Kings
Of Orient Are." As they go, PHARES kneels
in awe at the scene of the Nativity.)*

PHARES. *(When the KINGS have departed)*

Something moves in my breast. Something
quiets my terror.

Peace like sweet sleep is fallen gently over my
fearing.

What child is this with power to make me for-
get all evil?

I am become again like a small babe in spirit.

Would I had brought a gift! Naught have I
but these presents,

Presents from Herod,—vile, unfit for gifts to a
Savior!

*(He takes off the jewels and throws them aside,
kneeling at last, shorn of ornament. Then, with
arms outstretched.)*

Naught have I of my own,—only myself to offer,—

So do I give my hands and heart in service forever.

(As he bends low in his first prayer, the ANGEL speaks.)

ANGEL.

Joseph, the time is near when thou must depart this kingdom.

Arise, take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt.

And be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek

The young child to destroy Him.

(JOSEPH gives his hand to MARY, who, taking up the BABE, rises carefully. JOSEPH puts an arm about her and together they follow the ANGEL off right. PHARES remains kneeling. No sooner are they gone than a commotion is heard off left and the dark-cloaked form of MARIUS the spy, followed by the two GUARDS of HEROD with torches or lanterns, enters and makes his way to the stage. MARIUS does not at first see PHARES, so aghast is he at the disappearance of the BABE.)

MARIUS. *(Harshly)*

Search, fools, and hasten. They cannot be far,
The woman and the child,—for she was weak
And the man with them old, the child too young
For distant traveling. Don't stare at me!

Herod will kill you if you let them go.

(Seeing PHARES for the first time.)

Nay, wait a moment! Who is here?

(He seizes PHARES by the shoulder and pulls him to his feet. The two stare at one another. MARIUS drops his hand from PHARES.)

Phares, upon my word, and on his knee!
Phares, the favorite!

(Suspiciously)

And why are you here?

The king is banqueting. Your place is there.

(A light dawning.)

Here is a traitor if the signs be clear.

Where have they gone, you villain? Answer me!

(He seizes PHARES again.)

PHARES. *(Shaking off MARIUS' grasp)*

Unhand me, Marius, thou worse than dog,

Fit slave of dastard master! Murderer

Of children! The Babe whom you seek is fled,

Guarded by One far greater than the King.

MARIUS. *(Aghast at his temerity)*

Madman! This means your death.

PHARES.

Better than life,

And Herod's ruling. Death means naught to me.

MARIUS. *(Beside himself)*

Search, fools! The child must not escape our hands.

I'll keep this fellow silent.—He's unarmed.

Search in the streets.

(The GUARDS exit. Then, to PHARES)

Herod shall hear of this,

And give you to the torture of your deeds.

PHARES. *(Uneasily)*

Nay, not the torture, Marius. Kill me here.

I have seen men forswear themselves when torn,

And I would not do likewise, being weak.

MARIUS. *(Laughing)*

Phares, found kneeling to a weakling Babe

Born in a manger of a common blood!

Herod will laugh at this,—yet 'tis not strange,
(*Insultingly*)

Seeing you came of servants.

PHARES. (*Ignoring the insulting tone*)

Kill me, Marius.

MARIUS. (*Scornfully*)

And lose reward from Herod? Nay, you fool,
Herod will blame you for my failure and
Give me reward for bringing you to him.

(*To the GUARDS who re-enter*)

You did not find them? Well, no matter now,
The child cannot escape.

(*Draws out parchment.*)

Herod commands

The death of all men-children under two

If the babe is not found tonight by us.

(*Pauses to see if PHARES will disclose hiding place
of the BABE.*)

Here are the orders under Herod's seal!

Take this then, Astor, to your captain straight.

Bid him to start at once a thorough search,

Let none have warning and so hide their babes.

(*Laughing*)

'Tis well I am no father. Go with haste.

(*ASTOR exits with the parchment.*)

Decius, make this man prisoner. He warned

The ones we sought. We will to Herod straight.

Phares the favorite,—traitor! There'll be sport,

When you are tortured.

PHARES. (*Unable to stand the thought*)

Marius, kill me! Child,

(*Drops on knees.*)

Born in a manger, help! I am afraid.

MARIUS. (*Slapping his knee, with mirth*)

Bacchus! a jest! Pray to a new born child!

(*He starts to laugh, but suddenly there is heard
music, a chorus of heavenly voices singing*)

*"Glory to God In The Highest, And On Earth
Peace Good Will To Men." And as the voices
die away a light shines upon PHARES, and
GABRIEL speaks sweetly.)*

GABRIEL.

Fear not, Phares, for God doth hear all prayers!
So doth God answer thine and send thee
strength.

For sake of Him born in a manger low,
This night art thou made clean of all past sins.
Be steadfast in thy faith. Though thou art
tried

And tested in the body do not fear;
Flame, torture, and the knife hurt not thy
spirit!

And it shall come to pass ye shall find love
And joy and peace that passeth understanding.

*(PHARES stands in ecstasy, with face upraised, but
MARIUS, who has been staring stupidly at the
light, rouses himself angrily. DECIUS is as
though in a daze.)*

MARIUS.

Lay hands upon him, Decius. There is naught
Here to alarm you. Better hold him fast!

We must report to Herod, 'ere the dawn.

GABRIEL. *(Again halting MARIUS)*

Tell Herod, Marius, that through the land
Arises the sad voice of Rachel mourning
The slaughter of her children. 'Tis a sound
To ring in Herod's ears for years to come.
Tell Herod a new reign is come on earth,
Of mercy and forgiveness, not of blood.
Tell him that, Marius.

MARIUS. *(Stupidly to PHARES)*

What do you say?

PHARES. (*His face alight with peace and a strange prophetic courage*)

Naught, Marius, lead on.

(*But suddenly stretching forth his hands.*)

For unto us

A child is born to be the leader of mankind unto
all generations,

And He shall bring light out of darkness, and
give courage and strength to the weak and
lowly.

And all the Herods of the world shall not pre-
vail against Him.

LIGHT FADES. CURTAIN

(*The chorus of voices sings "Joy To The World,
The Lord Has Come."*)

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TWEEDLES

Comedy in 3 acts, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson. 5 males, 4 females. 1 interior. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

Julian, scion of the blue-blooded Castleburys, falls in love with Winsora Tweedle, daughter of the oldest family in a Maine village. The Tweedles esteem the name because it has been rooted in the community for 200 years, and they look down on "summer people" with the vigor that only "summer boarder" communities know.

The Castleburys are aghast at the possibility of a match, and cail on the Tweedles to urge how impossible such an alliance would be. Mr. Castlebury laboriously explains the barrier of social caste, and the elder Tweedle takes it that these unimportant summer folk are terrified at the social eminence of the Tweedles.

Tweedle generously agrees to co-operate with the Castleburys to prevent the match. But Winsora brings her father to realize that in reality the Castleburys look upon them as inferiors. The old man is infuriated, and threatens vengeance, but is checkmated when Julian unearths a number of family skeletons and argues that father isn't a Tweedle, since the blood has been so diluted that little remains. Also, Winsora takes the matter into her own hands and outfaces the old man. So the youngsters go forth triumphant. "Tweedles" is Booth Tarkington at his best. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

JUST SUPPOSE

A whimsical comedy in 3 acts, by A. E. Thomas, author of "Her Husband's Wife," "Come Out of the Kitchen," etc. 6 males, 2 females. 1 interior, 1 exterior. Costumes, modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

It was rumored that during his last visit the Prince of Wales appeared for a brief spell under an assumed name somewhere in Virginia. It is on this story that A. E. Thomas based "Just Suppose." The theme is handled in an original manner. Linda Lee Stafford meets one George Shipley (in reality is the Prince of Wales). It is a case of love at first sight, but, alas, princes cannot select their mates and thereby hangs a tale which Mr. Thomas has woven with infinite charm. The atmosphere of the South with its chivalry dominates the story, touching in its sentiment and lightened here and there with delightful comedy. "Just Suppose" scored a big hit at the Henry Miller Theatre, New York, with Patricia Collinge. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

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